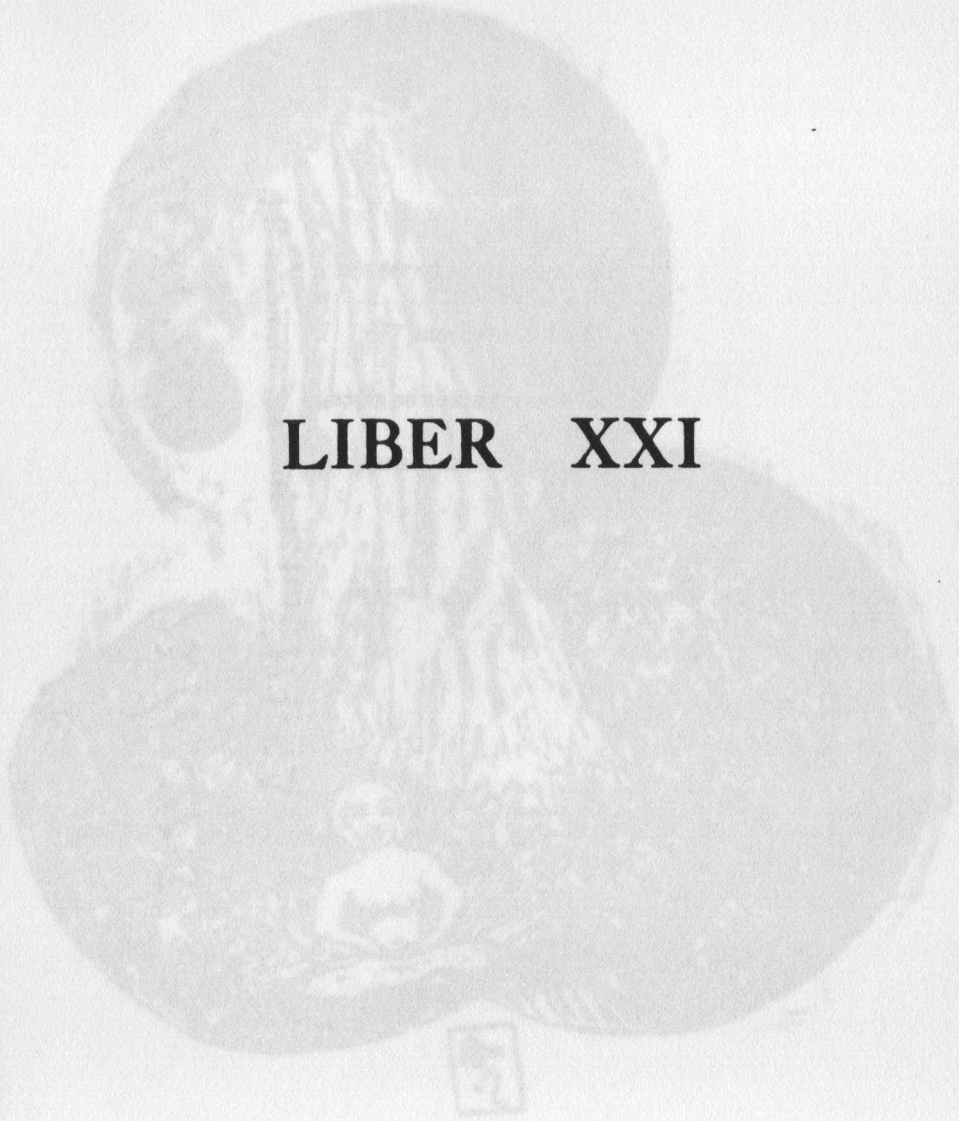
LIBER XXI



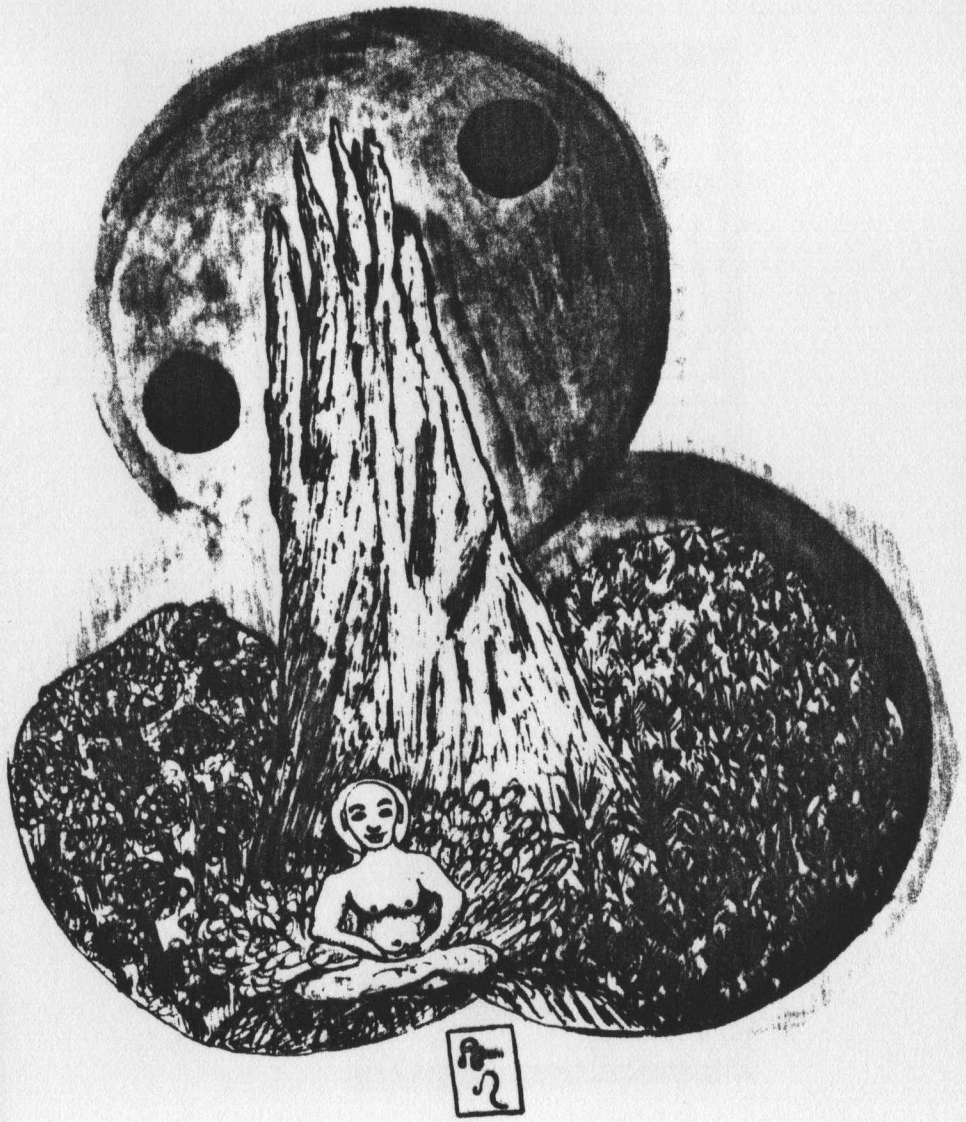
The Tao that can be told of

Is not the Absolute Tao;

The Names that can be given

Are not Absolute Names.

Lao-Tzu



LIBER XXI

清淨經

KHING KANG KING

THE CLASSIC

OF PURITY

first written down by me

葛玄

in the Episode of the Dynasty of Wu

and now made into a Rune

by me ALEISTER CROWLEY

A∴A∴ PUBLICATION IN CLASS B
Imprimatur 0 8 V 6°=5□ Imperator

Khing Kang King

The Classic of Purity

Being

Liber XXI

First written down by me

Ko Yuen

In the episode of the Dynasty of Wu and now made into a rime by me

Aleister Crowley

PART I

LAO KUN THE MASTER SAID:
TAO IS, DEVOID OF FORM—
YET HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE BROUGHT TO BIRTH,
AND NURTURED BY ITS NORM.

TAO HATH NO WILL TO WORK;
YET BY ITS WAY OF HEAVEN
THE MOON AND SUN REJOICE TO RUN
AMONG THE STARRY SEVEN.

TAO HATH NO NAME; ITS WORD
IS GROWTH, AND SUSTENANCE
TO ALL; I AIM TO GIVE IT NAME:
TAO (HEAVEN PROSPER CHANCE!)

TAO HATH TWIN PHASE, WITH TEH:
THE SILENT AND THE STRESSED.
OF MOTION, THOSE; OF THESE, REPOSE
SUBLIMELY MANIFEST.

HEAVEN MOVES, PURE SILENCE HE;
EARTH RESTS, BENEATH THE STRAIN;
SHUTTLE AND LOOM, AS WORD AND WOMB,
THEIR MYSTERY SUSTAIN.

PURE MOTION MAKETH REST
AS SILENCE MAKETH STRESS.
IF MAN WERE STILL, THEN HEAVEN SHOULD THRILL
WITH EARTH TO NOTHINGNESS.

SELF LOVETH SILENCE. YEA,
BUT MIND DISTRACTETH IT.
MIND LOVETH REST; BUT PASSION'S PEST
ALLURES THE TREMBLING WIT.

IF MAN RESTRAIN DESIRE,
HIS MIND WILL CEASE TO ROLL,
AND MIND'S RELEASE ALLOW PURE PEACE
OF SILENCE TO THE SOUL.

LOST, THE EXTERNAL LURES;
THEY TURN TO SEEK IT: THEN
ALL THINGS PERPLEX, CONFUSE, AND VEX
THOSE MISERABLE MEN.

DISORDERED THOUGHTS ARISE;
BODY AND MIND GROW SICK.
DISGRACE AND FEAR GROW YEAR BY YEAR
TO THEIR CLIMACTERIC.

WILD, THEY ARE TOSSED ABOUT
THROUGH LIFE AND DEATH; THEY QUIVER,
SUNK IN SEA-STRESS OF BITTERNESS,
AND LOSE THE TAO FOR EVER.

THE TRUE, THE ABIDING TAO!
WHO UNDERSTANDETH HATH;
WHO HATH THE TAO IS HERE AND NOW
IN SILENCE OF THE PATH.

SLAY SPACE; THEN NAUGHT ABIDES.
HOLD NOT THINE HOLY HAND!
WHEN NAUGHT GIVES BACK BEFORE THE ATTACK,
SERENE THY SILENCE STAND!

ALL'S REST, DEVOID OF MARK;
HOW SHOULD DESIRES FIX TOOTH?
WHEN THEY ARE PAST, THOU SURELY HAST
THE SILENCE OF THE TRUTH.

FLAWLESS THAT TRUTH AND FIXED,
YET APT TO EACH APPEAL
NATURE AND SENSE TO INFLUENCE—
THE MAGNET TO THE STEEL!

OH! THIS TRUE TOUCH WITH ALL
ELASTIC AND EXACT
THAT YET ABIDES ABOVE THEIR TIDES—
THE SILENCE FREE FROM ACT!

THE SENSES WILL NOT SOIL;
THE THOUGHT WILL NOT UPSTRESS;
NOR POISONS (GREED, WRATH, DULNESS) BREED
THEIR TRIFORM DEADLINESS.

MEN EARN NOT EASE OF TAO
FOR THEIR DESIRES' DISEASE:
BECAUSE THEIR MIND IS NOT REFINED
OF THOUGHT BY KILLING THESE.

IF ONE SHOULD SLAY DESIRES,
HIS MIND AND BODY SEEM
NO LONGER HIS, BUT PHANTASIES
DANCED IN A WANTON'S DREAM.

SLAY MIND, SLAY BODY, SLAY
THE EXTERNAL: MATTER GOES.
THEN SPACE REMAINS; RENEW THY PAINS!
UP! FRONT THE FINAL FOES!

PART II

LAO KUN THE MASTER SAID:
THE ADEPT IN SKILL OF SOUL
HATH NEVER AN AIM; THE BUNGLER'S SHAME
IS THAT HE GROPES A GOAL.

WHO MOST POSSESS THE TEH
CONCEAL THEIR MAGICK POWER;
WHO LEAST POSSESS EXERT THEIR STRESS
SEVEN TIMES IN EVERY HOUR.

THESE, WHO CLING FAST TO POWERS,
WHO GUARD THEM, AND DISPLAY
THEIR MAGICK ART—THEY ARE NOT PART
OF TAO NOR YET OF TEH.

MEN WIN NOT TRUTH OF TAO
BECAUSE THEIR MINDS ARE WRIED.
THE MIND UNCURBED, THE SELF'S PERTURBED,
AND LOSES TUNE OF TIDE.

HE THAT HATH THIS SHALL COME
LITTLE BY LITTLE, A BREATH,
SO FLOWETH HE NOW, TO TRUTH OF TAO,
WHEREIN HE VANISHETH.

MEN STYLE HIM LORD OF TAO,
YET HE HATH NONE TO LORD.
HID MOTIVE HE OF ALL THAT BE:
ENOUGH FOR HIS REWARD!

HE THAT CAN COMPREHEND
THIS DOCTRINE MAY TRANSMIT
THIS SACRED TAO TO MEN THAT VOW
THEMSELVES TO FATHOM IT.

APPENDIX

Khing Kăng King, or 'The Classic of Purity[1].'

So I must translate the title of this brochure, as it appears in the 'Collection of the Most Important Treatises of the Tâoist Fathers' (vol. xxxix, p. xvii), in which alone I have had an opportunity of perusing and studying the Text. The name, as given by Wylie (Notes, p. 178), Balfour (Tâoist Texts), and Faber (China Review, vol. xiii, p. 246), is *Khing King King*[2], and signifies 'The Classic of Purity and Rest.' The difference is in the second character, but both *Khing Kăng* and *Khing King* are well-known combinations in Tâoist writings; and it will be seen, as the translation of the Text is pursued, that neither of them is unsuitable as the title of the little Book.

It is, as Dr. Faber says, one of the 'mystical canons' of Tâoism; but the mysticism of Tâoism is of a nature peculiar to itself, and different from any mental exercises which have been called by that name in connexion with Christianity or Mohammedanism. It is more vague and shadowy than any theosophy or Sûfism, just as the idea of the Tâo differs from the apprehension of a personal God, however uncertain and indefinite that apprehension may be. Mr. Wylie says the work 'treats under very moderate limits of the subjection of the mental faculties.' This indeed is the consummation to which it conducts the student; a

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[1] 清淨經. [2] 清靜經.

condition corresponding to the nothingness which Lâo-ǯze contended for as antecedent to all positive existence, and out of which he said that all existing being came, though he does not indicate how.

I give to the Treatise the first place among our appendixes here because of the early origin ascribed to it. It is attributed to Ko Yüan (or Hsüan)[1], a Tâoist of the Wû dynasty (A. D. 222–277), who is fabled to have attained to the state of an Immortal, and is generally so denominated[2]. He is represented as a worker of miracles; as addicted to intemperance, and very eccentric in his ways. When shipwrecked on one occasion, he emerged from beneath the water with his clothes unwet, and walked freely on its surface. Finally he ascended to the sky in bright day[2]. All these accounts may safely be put down as the figments of a later time.

It will be seen that the Text ascribes the work to Lâo-ǯze himself, and I find it impossible to accept the account of its origin which is assigned by Lî Hsî-yüeh to Ko Hsüan. As quoted by Lî in the first of some notes subjoined to his Commentary, Ko is made to say, 'When I obtained the true Tâo, I had recited this *K*ing ten thousand times. It is what the Spirits of heaven practise, and had not been communicated to scholars of this lower world. I got it from the Divine Ruler of the eastern Hwa; he received it from the Divine Ruler of the Golden Gate; he received it from the Royal-mother of the West. In all these cases it was transmitted from mouth to mouth, and was not committed to writing. I now, while I am in the world, have written it out in a book. Scholars of the highest order, understanding it, ascend and become officials of Heaven; those of the middle order, cultivating it, are ranked among the Immortals of the Southern Palace; those of the lowest order, possessing it, get long years of life in the world, roam

[1] 葛元 or 葛玄. [2] 葛仙公.

[2] See the Accounts of Ko in the Biographical Dictionary of Hsiâo *K*'ih-han (1793), and Wang *K*'ât's supplement to the great work of Mâ Twan-lin, ch. 242.

through the Three Regions[1], and (finally) ascend to, and enter, the Golden Gate.'

This quotation would seem to be taken from the preface to our little classic by Ho Hsüan. If there were indeed such a preface during the time of the Wû dynasty, the corruption of the old Tâoism must have been rapid. The Hsî Wang-mû, or Royal-mother of the West, is mentioned once in *K*wang-ǯze (Bk. VI, par. 7); but no 'Divine Ruler' disfigures his pages. Every reader must feel that in the Classic of Purity he has got into a different region of thought from that which he has traversed in the Tâo Teh *K*ing and in the writings of *K*wang-ǯze.

With these remarks I now proceed to the translation and explanation of the text of our *K*ing.

Ch. 1. 1. Lâo the Master[1] said, The Great[2] Tâo has no bodily form, but It produced and nourishes heaven and earth[3]. The Great Tâo has no passions[4], but It causes the sun and moon to revolve as they do.

The Great[2] Tâo has no name[5], but It effects the growth and maintenance of all things[3].

I do not know its name, but I make an effort, and call It the Tâo[6].

[1] The name here is Lâo *K*ün (老君). I have stated (vol. xxxix, p. 40) that, with the addition of Thâi Shang, this is the common designation of Lâo-ǯze as the Father of Tâoism and deifying him, and that it originated probably in the Thang dynasty. It might seem to be used simply here by Ko Hsüan with the same high application; and since in his preface he refers to different 'Divine Rulers,' it may be contended that we ought to translate Lâo *K*ün by 'Lâo the Ruler.' But I am unwilling to think that the deification of Lâo-ǯze

[1] 'The three regions (三界)' here can hardly be the trilokya of the Buddhists, the ethical categories of desire, form, and formlessness. They are more akin to the Brahmanic bhuvanatraya, the physical or cosmological categories of bhûr or earth, bhuvaḥ or heaven, and svar or atmosphere.

had taken place so early. The earliest occurrence of the combination Lâo *K*ün which has attracted my notice is in the history of Khung Yung, a descendant of Confucius in the twentieth generation,—the same who is celebrated in the San 3ze *K*ing, for his fraternal deference at the age of four, and who met with a violent death in A. D. 208. While still only a boy, wishing to obtain an interview with a representative of the Lâo family, he sent in this message to him, 'My honoured predecessor and the honoured Lâo, the predecessor of your Lî family, equally virtuous and righteous, were friends and teachers of each other.' The epithet *K*ün is equally applied to Confucius and Lâo-3ze, and the combination Lâo *K*ün implies no exaltation of the latter above the other.

[2] See Tâo Teh *K*ing, chaps. 18, 25, 53.

[3] T. T. *K*., chaps. 1, 51, et al.

[4] See *K*wang-3ze, Bk. II, par. 2. 'Passions,' that is, feelings, affections; as in the first of the thirty-nine Articles.

[5] T. T. *K*., chaps. 1, 25, 32, 51.

[6] T. T. *K*., ch. 25.

2. Now, the Tâo (shows itself in two forms); the Pure and the Turbid, and has (the two conditions of) Motion and Rest[1]. Heaven is pure and earth is turbid; heaven moves and earth is at rest. The masculine is pure and the feminine is turbid; the masculine moves and the feminine is still[2]. The radical (Purity) descended, and the (turbid) issue flowed abroad; and thus all things were produced[1].

The pure is the source of the turbid, and motion is the foundation of rest.

If man could always be pure and still, heaven and earth would both revert (to non-existence)[3].

[1] This paragraph is intended to set forth 'the production of all things;' but it does so in a way that is hardly intelligible. Comparing what is said here with the utterances in the former paragraph, Tâo would seem to be used in two

senses; first as an Immaterial Power or Force, and next as the Material Substance, out of which all things come. Lî Hsî-yüeh says that in the first member of par. 1 we have 'the Unlimited (or Infinite) producing the Grand (or Primal) Finite.' On the Tâo in par. 2 he says nothing. The fact is that the subject of creation in the deepest sense of the name is too high for the human mind.

[2] Compare T. T. *K*., ch. 61.

[3] I do not understand this, but I cannot translate the Text otherwise. Mr. Balfour has:—'If a man is able to remain pure and motionless, Heaven and Earth will both at once come and dwell in him.' Lî explains thus:—天清地靜一齊返入於無矣. Compare T. T. *K*., ch. 16, and especially Ho-shang Kung's title to it,—歸根.

3. Now the spirit of man loves Purity, but his mind[1] disturbs it. The mind of man loves stillness, but his desires draw it away[1]. If he could always send his desires away, his mind would of itself become still. Let his mind be made clean, and his spirit will of itself become pure.

As a matter of course the six desires[2] will not arise, and the three poisons[3] will be taken away and disappear.

[1] Tâoism thus recognises in man the spirit, the mind, and the body.

[2] 'The six desires' are those which have their inlets in the eyes, ears, nostrils, the tongue, the sense of touch, and the imagination. The two last are expressed in Chinese by shăn, 'the body,' and î, 'the idea, or thought.'

[3] 'The three poisons' are greed, anger, and stupidity;—see the Khang-hsî Thesaurus, under 毒.

4. The reason why men are not able to attain to this, is because their minds have not been cleansed, and their desires have not been sent away.

If one is able to send the desires away, when he then looks in at his mind, it is no longer his; when he looks out at his body, it is no longer his; and when he looks farther off at external things, they are things which he has nothing to do with.

When he understands these three things, there will appear to him only vacancy. This contemplation of vacancy will awaken the idea of vacuity. Without such vacuity there is no vacancy.

The idea of vacuous space having vanished, that of nothingness itself also disappears; and when the idea of nothingness has disappeared, there ensues serenely the condition of constant stillness.

In this paragraph we have what Mr. Wylie calls 'the subjection of the mental faculties;' and I must confess myself unable to understand what it is. It is probably another way of describing the Tâoist trance which we find once and again in *K*wang-ẓze, 'when the body becomes like a withered tree, and the mind like slaked lime' (Bk. II, par. 1, et al.). But such a sublimation of the being, as the characteristic of its serene stillness and rest, is to me inconceivable.

5. In that condition of rest independently of place how can any desire arise? And when no desire any longer arises, there is the True stillness and rest.

That True (stillness) becomes (a) constant quality, and responds to external things (without error); yea, that True and Constant quality holds possession of the nature.

In such constant response and constant stillness there is the constant Purity and Rest.

He who has this absolute Purity enters gradually into the (inspiration of the) True Tâo. And

having entered thereinto, he is styled Possessor of the Tâo.

Although he is styled Possessor of the Tâo, in reality he does not think that he has become possessed of anything. It is as accomplishing the transformation of all living things, that he is styled Possessor of the Tâo.

He who is able to understand this may transmit to others the Sacred Tâo.

This is the consummation of the state of Purity. In explaining the former sentence of the fifth member, Lî Hsî-yüeh uses the characters of T. T. *K*., ch. 4, 道冲而用之或不盈, with some variation,—冲而用之, 不自滿假.

2. 1. Lâo the Master said, Scholars of the highest class do not strive (for anything); those of the lowest class are fond of striving[1]. Those who possess in the highest degree the attributes (of the Tâo) do not show them; those who possess them in a low degree hold them fast (and display them)[2]. Those who so hold them fast and display them are not styled (Possessors of) the Tâo and Its attributes[2].

[1] Compare the T. T. *K*., ch. 41, 1.
[2] Compare the T. T. *K*., ch. 38, 1.

2. The reason why all men do not obtain the True Tâo is because their minds are perverted. Their minds being perverted, their spirits become perturbed. Their minds being perturbed, they are attracted towards external things. Being attracted towards external things, they begin to seek for them greedily. This greedy quest leads to perplexities and annoyances; and these again result in disordered

thoughts, which cause anxiety and trouble to both body and mind. The parties then meet with foul disgraces, flow wildly on through the phases of life and death, are liable constantly to sink in the sea of bitterness, and for ever lose the True Tâo.

3. The True and Abiding Tâo! They who understand it naturally obtain it. And they who come to understand the Tâo abide in Purity and Stillness.

Our brief Classic thus concludes, and our commentator Lî thus sums up his remarks on it :—'The men who understand the Tâo do so simply by means of the Absolute Purity, and the acquiring this Absolute Purity depends entirely on the Putting away of Desire, which is the urgent practical lesson of the Treatise.'

I quoted in my introductory remarks Lî's account of the origin of the Classic by its reputed author Ko Hsüan. I will now conclude with the words which he subjoins from 'a True Man, 3o Hsüan :'—'Students of the Tâo, who keep this Classic in their hands and croon over its contents, will get good Spirits from the ten heavens to watch over and protect their bodies, after which their spirits will be preserved by the seal of jade, and their bodies refined by the elixir of gold. Both body and spirit will become exquisitely ethereal, and be in true union with the Tâo!'

Of this 'True Man, 3o Hsüan,' I have not been able to ascertain anything. The Divine Ruler of the eastern Hwa, referred to on p. 248, is mentioned in the work of Wang *Khî* (ch. 241, p. 21^{b}), but with no definite information about him. The author says his surname was Wang, but he knows neither his name nor when he lived.